Be careful what you wish for

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Be careful what you wish for

by Damascusa

Summary

Life hasn´t been kind to Will Graham. He lost his job on a farm - his last chance for changing his ways to get his life back together. But it doesn´t seem like everything´s too late yet. There ´s a legend of a man called Hannibal Lecter, a magician, who is said to answer your wishes without you having to say a single word. The villagers themselves, however, keep away from him.

But for Will, he could be the ticket to a better life. Be careful what you wish for...

(Disclaimer: I do not own Hannibal, the show and characters belong to their rightful owner Bryan Fuller. Same goes for Once Upon a Time, I don't own anything. Also I apologize if there are any grammatical mistakes, english is not my first language.)

Notes

Here´s a small sketch of how Hannibal´s castle looks:
https://tamira189.deviantart.com/art/Hannibals-Castle-690665777

Foolish mistake

August 15th, 1825

Carefully he casted up his eyes. Greeted by the warm sunshine he blinked several times and stared up to the ceiling of the barn. Underneath him cluttered a thick layer of hay, which scratched his skin with every movement and caused it to itch nastily. He moaned sleepily and sat up in the hay. That also caused the cozy warmth to simply vanish. He knew exactly that he fell asleep at work, but he didn´t really seem to care. He didn´t care because he hated his work.

The opened barn door let in the matutinal sunshine and smoothly illuminated the barn´s interior. It was a sign for him to know, that he apparently spent the night in here. Even the birds were already singing with zeal and joy. With a slightly roguish grin he ran a hand over his tired face and his shaggy hair.
Then he lazily began to stand up to risk a glance out of the barn. In case, the old farmer would find out, that he did not lift a finger yesterday, he was pretty sure, that he would lose his job quicker than he would prefer. But the thing was, that he needed the money urgently. It was the key for a better life.

If he lost his job here, he wouldn´t know, what all this would come to. Then he probably would have to see to it, that he could scrape by and support his dogs. Oh yes…his dogs. Of course he wanted to offer them a better life, too. But that would only be possible, if he gave it everything in his job. No job meant no money for him and his dogs.
This was his chance to pull out all the stops and head to the right direction. To make his wish come true.

However…the villagers often talk about someone with magic potency. They say nobody knows where he really lives nor who he really is. Someone who could accomplish all of your desires. They say, it wouldn´t even be necessary to open your mouth to speak, because he merely has to look you in the eye to get to know your wish. But his magic is also said to be highly paid…and the price not to be underestimated. The ones who dare to employ his services should be careful…careful about what they wish…

“Will? Where are you?”

Will bit his lower lip. He just saw his future walking on real thin ice right now. He prepared to keep a credible excuse in readiness, that should convince the older man to not to give him the sack.
Will cautiously stepped away from the barn door to avoid being discovered. Unfortunately, the farmer did not let himself be taken for a fool and entered the barn without missing a beat. His once so peaceful and sympathetic face has now turned into a mask full of anger and disappointment. His arms akimbo.

“Could you please explain, what the point of that is? I don´t pay you for living out your laziness!”

Will could not directly look at him. Whether it was from shame, fear or the misgiving of having lost his last best hope…he couldn´t tell. His gaze was firmly fixed on the ground and leapt from one point to another.

“Well…I think, I´ve given you enough chances. Since you apparently have not known to appreciate them, I see myself forced to not to employ you any longer. I´m sorry.”

The old man simply shrugged while the world collapsed on Will.

“No…no, you got something wrong there. I will change, I promise! Please…I…”

But his former employer didn´t let Will finish. He merely explained, that he set his chances at naught and he now has to bear with it. But Will didn´t give up and begged the older one to cut him a break, but his craving bit on granite and the man left the barn without losing another word.

Will was left in disbelief. He couldn´t accept, that he has just lost his last hope for a better life because of his stupid levity…and has to live with that burden from now on. He started to nervously move around, his fists clenched and his mind racing with anger. The anger starting to boil inside him, because he went nap and now lost his whole existence. Trying to tame his fury, he grabbed his bag, in which he only carried a bit food and a small money bag, and left the farmer´s property. He swore to himself to never ever show up here again.

After Will has already covered quite a distance, he casted a hurried glance back to the croft. There he could recognize the old farmer in front of the barn door again, who darted a reproachful glance at Will. Maybe he was truly sorry for kicking him out, but he didn´t care about that right now. He had other problems, he should find a solution as soon as possible for.

Will turned around and stared into the distance again, pretending he hadn´t seen anybody. His pace quickened mixed with an explosion of rage and dread while thinking of his future life.

But…maybe he wasn´t that lost after all…maybe…he should pursue the villager´s speaking and look for that…magician. He could help him provide a better life. That´s for sure. There´s no price Will wouldn´t pay for finally living the life he has desired for so long. He only had that special wish…break free from the financial worries and get to live a life in profusion.

But what Will did not know…he was being watched right now.

So be careful, what you wish for…

Playing with fire

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Having taken leave of his senses he slammed the door shut and slid down until he towing arrived on the wooden floor. He hugged his legs tight to him and buried his head deeply in them. Winston and the other dogs have gathered around him as he entered the house. They could sense, that something wasn´t right with Will today. Winston carefully poked him with his wet and cold nose, what caused Will to look up to him with a worried gaze. He forced himself to give Winston a narrow smile and stroked his bright brown fur.

“It´s okay, dear…” he whispered while he continued stroking.

His big, shiny eyes and the breathless panting made him almost look like Winston was smiling. That indeed conveyed him some comfort. If not much, but these dogs were Will´s family. And in a family nobody gets hung out to dry.

The other dogs whined unobtrusively and some of them wagged their tails, excited. Apparently because they were fully aware, that today something was not like any other day. What intelligent little creatures.
Sometimes, dogs were even way more considerate comrades than humans. Dogs have a very good sense of touch for their human´s worries. They would never ask what troubles you, but simply come at you with joyful pace, infect you with their positive aura and then snuggle up to you to soothe you. It doesn´t always need words to show somebody his caring. And that´s exactly why Will appreciated his posse so much. The mere thought on them being there for him, whenever he needed balm for his wounded soul, made him confident.

But what made him much more confident, was, that he soon could put an end to his life-long problems. Soon. Oh so soon…but for what price?

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His lantern´s metal tingled faintly, as Will stumbled through the forest in the middle of the night, watching his back every now and then. He couldn´t even explain what had gotten into him, but he had that nagging feeling, that he has seen something out there. And it seemed to follow him.

The glow of his only light source was rather dim what didn´t make it easy for him to find his way in that maze of trees. Whatever there was after him would get him, if he wouldn’t get away soon enough.
Then of all sudden he stopped to find his bearings. But that constant and unpredictable rustling was just stressing his mental sanity too much to concentrate on anything. He was visibly uncomfortable.

He slowly spun around with his lantern, trying to find out the source of the creepy noises. But strange enough, the rustling was gone. Everything was silent, except for an owl, that was singing lonely in the forest.

He continued looking around. Nothing.

He casted a scared glance to his left. Still nothing. Yes. No…

Will could not stand a chance against his pursuer.

He started to back away. Carefully, to not to arouse any attention. But then he encountered resistance.

Will suddenly felt a hot breath purring something in his right ear, what gave him the creeps. That voice was husky, mysterious…and damn close. Then a strong arm slid across his chest, preventing him from escaping.

"…Been looking for me?"

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all so much for the kudos! I really appreciate them!
Anyways, I hope you also like the new chapter. I don´t know, how many there will be added in the future, but I still hope, you´ll keep reading it! ^^

Closer

Chapter Summary

> Sorry for the late update. School kept me damn busy...but anyways, thank you all soo much for the kudos you left on this work! They always motivate me to go on writing, so...here´s the new chapter! :)
> Enjoy!

Will held his breath for the brief of a moment and blinked apprehensively. As he felt the grip loosen, he immediately used his chance to break free and identify the stranger who has been following him. With a swift turn Will turned to face him and rose his lantern, trying to recognize the man.

He stared into pitch-black darkness and a pair of shining eyes glanced back. Something seemed to have drawn the stranger´s interest.

Will´s gaze darkened. “Who are you? And why have you been chasing me through the forest?” His voice quivered a bit from the fear still gripping him to the marrow.

But the stranger merely snickered and stepped out from the darkness into the lantern´s dim light. The man who now stood before Will exuded some kind of warning. His gaze was mustering and watchful, hands folded and his whole appearance was pretty intimidating. A man you should never use a single false word in front of. He wore an expensive looking three-piece-suit and his blond hair fixed with some styling gel. Down-to-earth, reliable, he wanted people to see him as a trustworthy person.

He must be the magician, the villagers were speaking of.

The man then stepped closer to Will, causing him to back away preventively.

“To answer your question, young man, my name is Dr. Hannibal Lecter, but in common parlance I am also called ´The Magician´. And I do think I need to correct you. It has been you who was looking for me first. I just thought I…could turn it into a little game.”

Hannibal smiled at Will.

“And besides that…I knew you would come and look for me. I was watching you.”

Will looked at him in disbelief.

Before he was even able to answer, Hannibal slowly approached him once again and whispered gently in his ear. Way too close for Will´s taste. But if he had flinched from

Hannibal, he would have made things so awkwardly difficult…now he had the chance to change his life…he didn´t want to fail it because of his unstableness.

“I know…what you wish for.”

Then Hannibal slowly started to circle around Will like a predator, granting his victim no way to get away. He gently slid his fingers across his neck while he walked around him, feeling his pulse. Will was indeed nervous.

The younger one didn´t dare to glance to his side, merely staring right ahead. His body was shaking of nervousness.

But to Will's relief the magician soon abstained again and was probably patiently waiting for a contradiction. One that Hannibal could easily retaliate.

Since Will´s gaze only swayed and never met Hannibal´s face, he saw himself forced to ruggedly grab his chin to make him look in his eyes. His fingers were pressed in his cheeks so strongly, that Will hissed in pain and finally watched him with an intense gaze.

“Just be silent…you…long for a better life, which is no longer characterized by poverty and financial problems. You want to live in freedom and independence.”
Then he let go of him, what caused Will to abruptly rub his chin, while answering the question with a pained yes.

“Do you now demand me to accomplish your wish?”

Hannibal smirked. He almost had Will where he wanted him, he merely had to give him a little push in the right direction.

And the magician waited silently for an answer, naïve Will thought about what he gambled with here. Well, of course he could set an end to his pathetic poverty and start over completely new. But the constant reminder of what he would have to pay always got into his mind…and it scared him, though on the other hand he was curious about what would happen, should he agree to Hannibal´s services.
As the throbbing pain slowly vanished, Will raised his gaze and finally could look Hannibal straight in the eye.

“…Yes…I…yes, but…what price do you demand for making my wish come true?”

Silence. Hannibal had to put on his mask to not to make Will suspicious. Oh what an easy catch he was…

So while he thought about a price, Hannibal found himself wondering, if he should keep the young man maybe? Company was something Hannibal had always missed and maybe he´d prefer to keep him…but in case he tried to get away…Hannibal would play a mean version of hide and seek, in which no one would get out alive. Oh and how he could smell his fear , thinking himself oh-so-clever…and the terrified look on his face. Almost too good to simply devour like all the others before him. But on the other hand...

“Will…I think I´ve made up my mind…”

The younger one casted an expectant glance at him.

Then, after several seconds of stony silence, Hannibal slowly approached him and pulled a knife out of his pocket. With a pitiful look on his face, Will stared helplessly at the eerily shining blade.

“No…” He gasped and stumbled backwards before he hastily left the scene of event.

But Hannibal just stood there, not moving an inch and watched his new customer flee. There was no escape for him, that was for sure…he had already agreed to Hannibal´s help. And no one ever got away from Hannibal the Cannibal.

Truth

Chapter Notes

Okay I´m terribly sorry for this delay, but you have to forgive me :,D I haven´t had time to translate the chapter and oh well...so it went.
Thank you so much for all the kudos and for reading (comments are also very appreciated :3)!
Not beta-read!

His legs hurt. Lungs were working flat out and his heart throbbed exhausted out of his quivering chest. As he finally stopped to catch his breath, he used his opportunity to analyse his surroundings.
He was close to the clearing from which he first came and the density of the trees became more and more open. Furthermore he could exactly recall the moss he had seen on the trees on his way into the forest. Moss has always been west-facing, so Will had at least one advantage. He actually had chance to find his way back to the village.

But not everything was on Will´s behalf. The light of his lantern began to fade away slowly and sunrise still was out of reach…

What also bothered him was, that he has left the magician empty-handed in the forest. For sure Hannibal will wait for the price he demanded…even if Will wasn´t pleased of what he wanted. Every magic comes at a price.

But even though he exactly knew, that there would be a twist in the whole thing, he accepted Hannibal´s help nevertheless…oh why has he just been so naïve? Nobody knew what the magician was further capable of. Nobody knew exactly what happened to his victims…his so-called “customers”.

Will could feel the anger boiling up inside him. Fury about himself and his god damned levity. He abutted against the next best tree and leant his head against the bark, trying to tame his rage. His gaze was directed skywards and so he stood there in the lonely silence of the woods, staring up to the dark blue ceiling full of sparkling stars. But the heavily vegateted treetops kept him from enjoying the full night-sky`s beauty, so he was only able to see faint twinkling peeking through the leaves. Will took a deep breath and closed his eyes for a brief moment.

Oh he was sure…Hannibal Lecter would not be long in coming for him.

"Hide wherever you want…I will find you!"

Will shuddered by the mere thought of that. The fear of his unknown future was a heavy burden to carry and frightening none the less.
He screwed up his face to a teary grimace and left his resting place. He couldn´t stay here any longer… With that uncomfortable feeling Will eventually headed off to the clearing and tried not to look back, no matter what would be-from sheer fear of the magician waiting for him to turn his gaze in the opposite direction.

In the distance the lush forest soil scrunched. It slowly increased to a strolling rhythm and finally culminated in dashing running.

But Will didn´t notice any of that.

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He ambled along the abandoned street inside of the village. Where there was bustle in the daytime, there lay a ghostly shroud of silence right now. Nothing more than a yawning chasm. And while he stumbled through the alleys, Will inwardly prayed that the fortuneteller would show up on today´s market during the day, because he felt that frantic compulsion to calling her for advice. He has known the woman for quite a long time and they often meet for a small talk in the evening, when the vendors start to stow away their goods. Madame du Maurier always closed her gates into another world a bit earlier due to the lack of visitors, most of them had already left the market, so the number of the people left there could be counted with the fingers of one hand.

Anyways, Will could think himself safe for now. There wasn´t a soul in sight on the broad, cobbled street. Even the houses standing lined up on every side seemed eerily dark, but at the same time peacefully silent. That meant nobody could´ve watched him from a window. Oh the paranoia gets worse…

As Will finally reached the end of the street, he turned in at a narrow black alley and soon his small house came into sight. It was rather outlying and maybe even lonely, but Will avoided most of the people as well as he could. Because of that, some villagers even consider him as “strange” or simply wonder what might be wrong with him. It actually were the fewest ones Will felt like they would take him as they find him. That´s also one of the reasons why he highly appreciated the friendship with Madame du Maurier. She numbered among the rare exceptions.

Then, after a brief walk, he finally reached the front door of his house and fished the keys out of his trousers. With a smooth click the door opened and immediately after Will entered the living room, his dogs charged at him with glee. Gladly they surrounded him, offering him absolutely no room for moving forward. Will let them live out their joy, but after a while he cautiously bore his way through the crowd to deposit his lantern on the kitchen counter.

But even with the faint light the lantern still offered, Will recognized a small, white note on the countertop. Besides lay a small butcher knife, covered in blood and some of it had already touched a part of the paper, now soaked in red. With shaking hands and confusion written in is face he picked up the note and read the following:

It´s rude to simply leave without paying…isn´t that so, William?

His mouth opened to a panicked gasp. His fingers lost the strength to hold the piece of paper any longer and let it slip to the floor. Will slowly paced backwards, he had to assimilate what he has just seen here. The bloody knife, the note…could the magician possibly have something to do with all of this?

He lifted his hands over his head and started to nervously walk back and forth. His breath was slightly shaking and Will didn´t know anymore how to handle his fear.
From that moment on it became even more acute for him to see the fortune teller...

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The market was pretty well-attended that day. In the air the people´s murmurs and excited chatting drowned the village´s blissful atmosphere and dozens of visitors pushed and shoved through the crowded place to get a good view on the vendor´s products.

On days like these Madame du Maurier would be present for sure. Many people came from out-of-town and Bedilia was one of the few scryers ashore, so there was a high probability, that lots of visitors here would go and ask for their individual future. So did Will, but for far different reasons. He could picture his fate to himself without some ridiculous cards. What he needed was some good advice and wise words from someone who could listen.

After Will dug his way through the crowds, he caught a glimpse of a diminutive, purple-coloured tent with lavish oriental adornments. He instantly headed for it and was there in no time. Surprisingly fast for that huge amount of people on today´s market. The curtains were fixed with slim, golden ropes on each side of the tent, welcoming everyone who was about to enter.

Will ducked down and accessed the fortune teller´s regnum.

“Oh, Will. How good to see you again!”, a warm voice greeted him.

The light on the inside was rather dim, merely illuminated by two candles that stood on the edge of the round table opposite to each other, bickering unruly. In the middle of the table the magic orb was placed, in which white mist gently wafted.

“Madame du Maurier…unfortunately I haven´t come to make small talk with you. There´s something, I have to urgently discuss with you…”

Bedilia darted an intense glance at him, making Will feel uncomfortable. Her gaze was so unbelievably deepened and distant at once.
Then she lowered her gaze and added:

“Sit down, dear. I think, you´re right, that there´s something to speak about. You´re in great trouble, am I right?”

Was she reading Will´s mind? Well, she was a fortune teller after all, so you never knew.

She gave him a small smile.

Will briefly nodded in agreement.

Silence. Bedilia let a few seconds pass, before she placed her middle-and forefingers on her temples and closed her eyes. The orb on the table, seperating the two of them, suddenly started to oddly sparkle. The white mist then changed its colour into a velvet shade of red, that abruptly turned to pitch-black.

“Madame…”

Before Will could even finish his sentence, the candles got blown out by a fierce gust of wind. Now only the orb slightly illuminated the tent´s inside. The fortune teller instantaneously opened her eyes widely. She had an unsettlingly terrified look on her face. Not long after she recognized, that the colour of her orb has changed Bedilia immediately saw that as a warning.

“Will Graham…” Bedilia almost whispered “You seem to be in more trouble than I ever thought you would be…somebody is after you. And he won´t rest before he has what he wants from you.”

These words triggered understanding in Will, he now was fully aware of the seriousness of his foolish naivety. He buried his face in his hands to hide it from Bedilia.

“Black magic…humbug…”, Bedilia whispered under her breath while she shook her head.

“I don´t know whether to congratulate you for your escape or to better cuss you for it.” She said with a slightly more relaxed expression.
Will revealed his face again and raised his gaze to look Bedilia in the eye. Also something Will rarely did.

“What do you mean?”, he pressed her on.

The blond woman leant forward.

“Hannibal Lecter…is not only a magician…”, she paused for a moment. “But also a cannibal…he…eats his victims. Sooner or later – no matter if they paid the price he demanded for making their wish come true – he will come for them. At the top of his list, of course, are the ones, who refuse to pay…like you Will…”.

Now everything made sense. Now Will knew the true intention of the magician and what the note meant.

It even became clear to him why all of the villagers avoided him that much. He was a redoubtable man and the natives here knew exactly why he promised his victims to accomplish everything they longed for…to get an easy prey. Human beings, that were credulous enough, would fall into his trap way easier than the suspicious ones. But to be honest…who wouldn´t like the idea of having all of his wishes lipread?

A whole new level

Chapter Summary

No spoilers here, read and see what happens next ;)

„Will?“

Will felt the walls come closer. Everything around him blurred into a single vortex of smooth candlelight and blackness. He felt hot and sensed the sweat trickling from his forehead. He was losing control. For him it was an experience like falling while he was actually sitting on the chair and dying while he was alive. What was still real and what merely was a product of his fragile mind? For Will everything seemed to happen without any real reason, he couldn´t allocate what just happened and why.

Bedilia sat in front of him, trying to talk insistently to him. Since he didn’t answer, but only stared right ahead with an expression filled to the brim with fright, she saw herself forced to take the matter further.
“Cave inimicum…”, she whispered under her breath, preoccupied with concentrating to guarantee the spell´s effect.

Will began to pant frantically. In his point of view, Bedilia sat there with a devilish smile and brought her hands up to her face with crooked movements. That could not be her. That sly smile was not real, just a fake. She seemed to be played like a marionette with someone pulling the strings to make her smile, sad or whatever the puppet master wanted her to do.

She laid them flatly on her visage and started to pull off the skin, that awry grin still present. There was a disgustingly slimy sound while she tore it off, like forcefully digging in a flesh wound. Blood slowly began to pour down on her pale arms and soon a pool of deep red substance covered the floor. No screams in agony, no emotion at all, just a whole lot of nothing…like a doll. Merely an empty shell, where there was no place for a heart nor a soul.

But before Will could actually see what hid under the “mask”, she disappeared from her former place. It was like cutting out a movie scene unprofessionally. Only the scared beating of his adrenaline drugged heart could be heard. A few seconds there was complete silence and Will already thought it was over, when suddenly Hannibal appeared throning on the fortune teller´s seat. Will almost shrieked in fear, but even though he was so close to an emotional breakdown, he somehow managed to keep his mind in one piece. The magician´s face was hidden in the candlelight´s shadow and his facial features looked like a skull in the dim light while watching Will with curiosity, but his evil smirk was still to be seen.

“So we meet again…isn´t it nice to have a little small talk with his old aquaintances…and to clear his depts?”

Hannibal chuckled low. Will tried to move or at least prepared to fight when he needed to, but he was unable to do so, he felt sluggish and something kept him from standing up. Black magic, as Bedilia assumed.
After that horrifying scenario nothing happened. The time Will sat there, waiting for the next terror, elapsed seemingly endless and the ticking in his head almost drove him to insanity. His head throbbed with pain, but the clock didn´t stop.

It´s only a matter of time…

But was all of that even real or just another hallucination? Will couldn´t tell, but he was sure, that the magician had exactly planned to terrorize him the way he did right now.
The fictive ticking grew louder as Hannibal slowly rose from his chair. Even though he walked in a pacing tread around the desk, his movements seemed unrealistic, like in a dream. Will was still unable to get away, so all he could do in that moment was to pray and hope, that this nightmare would soon have an end.

But Hannibal didn´t stop – it would have been a miracle if he would have any mercy for his victim. The cadenced clattering of his heels was the only thing Will heard despite the eerie clock ticking. With every step the enemy came closer, a harsh static noise added in his head, what made the scenario much more terrifying than before. Like an orchestra that announced the sentience of approaching death. At least it was close to it.
Will closed his eyes, he was unable to cope with the mental stress anymore. He already prepared to getting killed barbarously and yet he couldn´t bear the thought of having to die so early in his life. Tears began to fill his lids and one single drop even managed to run down his burning cheeks.

Then, in a split of a second, Hannibal finally pounced on the him. However, as Will was expecting something stabbing him or worse, he was gone. He carefully opened his eyes again, still afraid of what might lurk outside. Gone. Will suspiciously looked around in the tent, but Hannibal was nowhere to be seen. Merely black smoke surrounded him, the same one he saw in Bedilia´s orb…strange coincidence. But not only his pursuer was gone, but also that uncomfortable ticking. What was that just supposed to mean?

Will tried to calm down again. Now that there was nothing that could harm him in any way, his fear also slowly vanished from his shaking body. He was still hyperventilating and his heart about to tear apart, but he was safe. That was the only thing that mattered right now.

After that, he sensed a beautiful sound out of what felt like a hundred miles away. With every passing second, the melody grew louder until Will could categorize it as a voice. A warm, velvet voice, that spoke to him through a long, dark tunnel. It sounded distant and yet so close, like the soothing words of a mother, who tried to comfort her child after having a nightmare.

As the vision brightened up after a while, Will blinked several times to make sure that he was actually awake and not caught in another horrible dream. Everything was as it seemed, even the fortune teller was sitting on the right place. The young man studied the woman´s face and realized that her lips moved to form words. She repeated this over and over again with a worried gaze upon her features. Will gradually regained his senses trapped in the darkest hell of his imagination moments ago and eventually he was able to interpret the silent message.

“Will?”

Even her voice was drunken in sorrow.

But thanks to Bedilia´s timely intervention Will was now safe again.

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Several moments passed in wordless silence. Will´s clothes and hair were soaked with sweat and he still breathed unnaturally fast, but he slowly regained control over his lungs. He watched Bedilia closely. Will looked her deeply in the eye, they shone like the ocean on a sunny day. Endless expanses and as unpredictable as the psych of a human being. She couldn´t tell what that look was supposed to mean.
Bedilia patiently waited until Will entirely calmed down. She could perfectly imagine what her friend has just gone through, so she gave him the time he needed to get terra firm again. Even if it should turn out to be difficult.

Anyways, the fortune teller was also aware that her spell wouldn´t last until forever. The black magic´s empire has worked with dozens of bluffs and hocus-pocus since the year one… Hannibal would certainly find a way to shatter Will´s magical shelter. Like a hungry lion, that gently circled around his prey´s cage, eagerly searching for a flaw to finally reach his helpless victim. Will was not to be envied.
But Bedilia sensed how the evil powers gradually backed away, as the young man progressively became still. The air somehow felt like refreshed due to the unsettling stress that also vanished instantly after the spell was spoken. Luckily it has made an impact at all. She couldn´t quite remember, when she last used that rune, but it must´ve been at least two decades ago. To say it honestly, one doesn´t need to shelter someone with magic every day. Once in a while maybe the one or other customer asked her to use it, but in this case, it was the only way to save Will.
Will then forced himself to give the fortune teller a tiny smile and didn´t break the eye contact. It was a genuine one.

“Thank you…for having saved my life.”

Bedilia returned the gesture.

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He was so close. And yet so far away. Now at least.

An invisible power forced him back like a glass wall that was supposed to protect his victim from now on. Hannibal had to give in, this time he had no other choice. But it indeed was a brisk change in a usually so monotonous pursuit, this time it was a lot more fun. He may be naïve, but he wasn´t stupid after all, he knew how to use his hands and feet to struggle.

In comparison to his former prey, nobody has ever been as persistent and well protected as Will. Just like a fragile, little teacup, hidden deep inside of the armoire only for very special occasions. For that nothing could harm its delicate nature. Something of high value indeed.

Something worth to not to give up after the first defeat.

But apart from his value, Will was now out of reach for the magician. If he still dared to come closer to him, the spell would not let that happen. It´s almost like fighting fire with fire. You will never be able to extinguish the flame with its own kind. But with its greatest enemy: water. The flame will shrink until there is merely an inconspicuous gleam left. And when Hannibal acted by these rules, he would soon find the one counterspell, he was looking for.

But for now he had to accept the foil and decided to backtrack, so he could plan his further strategy right down to the last detail.

Oh, how he wondered who of the two of them would come off as the winner in their little game of cat and mouse…

***

“Are you sure, that I can let you go out there alone again?”

Will was about to leave. At the very same time when he wanted to step out of the fortune teller´s tent, he stopped and slightly turned his head in the direction of Bedilia, but only to admire the floor.
“You don´t have to worry about me, I´m not a child anymore…”, he paused for a moment, thinking about the right words to pick, “…one day or another I´ll have to face my fear anyways.”

With these words, he let float in the room, he eventually left the woman. She actually wanted to give Will a piece of wise advice for life, but he was gone within a few seconds without turning back. The loosened curtain still swang in smooth movements, leaving her behind with a feeling, like other one had never been here. Bedilia sighed and prayed, that everything would go well.

In the meantime, Will already prowled around in the market. He enjoyed this new won feeling of safety and began to forget all the sorrows that plagued him before. Now that he was protected by scryer´s spell, nothing could do harm to him anymore. It felt like an invisible suit of armour. He absolutely didn´t regret having asked Bedilia for help, after all she has saved Will´s life. Who knows, what would´ve happened, if she didn´t intervene? Something worse than death probably, according to the fact, that Hannibal already managed to break in his mind to terrorize him.

But Will still wondered what it really was that the magician wanted from him so badly? Did he truly merely want him on his dinner plate, served with carefully chosen ingredients and some expensive wine to top the taste of his flesh off, like he supposedly did with his former victims?

Maybe it would be wise to wait and see. Time will answer all your questions soon enough.

***

“Hannibal, my lord, you indeed look angered. Is there something wrong?”, a voice asked.

Hannibal sat on his ancient desk, proving his age with carved signs and latin spells, studying his grimoire. He was searching for a useful counterspell to break the effect of the magical shelter, but he found nothing. The room itself was dimly illuminated with several candles, fixed on every side of the walls, flickering mysteriously. The magician was surprisingly calm, he put some kind of mask over his true anger. He wanted no one to see what he truly felt, not even his own servant. And yet he was clever enough to see through the masquerade.

“Hook, can´t you see that I´m busy? I would politely advise you to not to disturb me while researching.”, Hannibal answered in a still calm tone.

“But sir, I nearly see that something is wrong with you. Come on, just tell me.” Hook´s words played with a slightly mocking accent. The magician didn´t have to look at his face to recognize the sly smirk in the boy´s visage. Actually he should have been punished for his rudeness long ago and yet Hannibal didn´t, because he was too efficient for him.

The cannibal sighed and leant back in his old leather chair, closing his eyes for a brief moment.

“As rude as you may be, I do admire your courage to keep up that mocking behaviour, even though you exactly know, what might await you.”

Hook thought about his master´s words. Since he knew how important he actually was for Hannibal, he also knew, that he would never serve him as an evening snack. That´s why he went out to hunt down people who were stupid enough to believe the promises of the Loreley. And of course he didn´t kill them right away - that would be far too suspicious to the other people in case they got wind of what had happened.
The captain crossed his arms and gently strolled in the cannibal´s direction with another rude grin on his face. The chains on his clothing rustled with every movement and his boots left muffled sounds of footsteps as he moved along.

“So you´ve found a new victim?”

Hook leant on the front side of the desk with his buttocks, his facial expression unchanged while he met Hannibal´s gaze. He tried to stay neutral, though he seriously played with the thought of putting the captain in his place.

“I never thought someone would be that hard to catch. I tried to several times, but somehow he managed to slip through my grasp and is now protected by a fortune teller´s spell.” The magician impatiently dribbled with his fingers on the desk.

But Hook regained his attention fast as he shut the thick, old book with one hand. A small cloud of dust whirled up, mixing with the air and disappearing shortly after.

“Did you just say…fortune teller?”

Hannibal ignored him, patiently waiting for an answer. He had a slight suspicion on what he might hint at.

“Sir, the solution is on the dice!”, Hook laughed out loud, “if you want to catch him, you first need to checkmate the fortune teller! She alone is the responsible person, capable of protecting that guy! She´s the spell´s origin, the one that keeps him from your influences!”

The magician seriously thought about his servant´s words. He smiled sinisterly.

So Bedilia was next in line…

Turning Tables

Chapter Summary

The tables have turned, so it seems...
Enjoy! :)
Oh and btw...I'm sorry to tell but this fic is currently on hiatus. BUT I have good news: I'm finally (!) translating the upcoming chapter. Yeeah

So much has changed, since Bedilia put a spell on Will to protect him. Less problems, less sorrows…almost everything that made Will´s life harder than it actually was. It felt like the evil of the bygone days has been magically obliterated, for that it could not cause any more damage.

But apparently fate wanted to lead him up the garden path, to make him see and feel that it´s not all roses. Some of them are made of pure beauty, but hide a threatening poison inside of them.
Compared to the events lately, that poison almost cost Will his life. Only to allay a cannibal´s hunger for prey. But in the end he seemed to have learned his lesson after escaping his death by a whisker. Thanks to Bedilia.

It was late evening that day and Will sat on his bed, admiring the night sky with its stars shining with glory. It somehow reminded him of the chase through the woods. The moment as he rested against a tree and hopelessly stared upon the sky with the stars watching him from above. His breath untamed. Adrenaline pumping through his veins with that unsettling knowledge of not knowing what to expect next.
Going through this experience once more made him shiver. It felt like trailing a finger down his back, barely touching it. He sat still, hoping the uncomfortable feeling would pass soon.

…

The sky stayed unchanged. No cloud spoiling the moon´s glow and earth itself as silent as it has always been. Even his dogs were out of energy. Some of them gathered around his naked feet and the rest of the pack slept at the fireside. He turned his head to look at the dogs sleeping peacefully in front of his own bed. Winston was one of the dogs seeking closeness to Will that evening. Most likely because he saved him from coming to a sorry end. He has been a really faithful little soul ever since he got picked up by Will, who cared for him and lovingly looked after the former stray.
The dog felt his master´s gaze upon him and casted a glance up on him and let out a yowling sigh. Not long after that, Winston decided to search for another place to lay down and lazily strolled through the living room. Immediately after he has gone, the dog´s warmth vanished and left behind an upcoming coldness against his skin.

Will watched him heading towards the fireplace with a slight curve on his lips. His “family”, gathered in front of a calmly flickering flame, cosily huddled together and peacefully sleeping. It felt good to see all of them so confident.

Will himself couldn´t quite get sleep that night. No signs of weariness or heavy eyelids. He wondered if he should get some whiskey before trying to rest, but on the other hand he didn´t want to startle his dogs. A soundless sigh urged to escape his lungs.

So he turned his gaze to look out of the window once again. Maybe that would make him somewhat tired. The fields and woods were as eerie as before with darkness lurking behind the trees. And maybe an owl started singing its lullaby, sitting alone on a cool branch.

But even though the surroundings didn´t change, Will had the feeling that something else sneaked in the calm of the scenery. That feeling was familiar, though. He tensed, waiting for that suspicion to confirm.
From far away, something moved. It seemed to have hidden in the shadows of the woods, now slowly starting to move its sluggish legs. A creature of pure black with the body of a stag and its head covered with raven´s feathers and antlers gracing its head now fully showed in the dim moonlight. The Nightmare Stag…

With a dignified tread it eventually paced out further, exhaling white protracted breathes of air with every step it took forward. Will watched the stag narrowly, until he could make out clearly where the creature headed to. It moved very slowly as it trotted over the extensive meadow. Its head nodded unwittingly and the black masquerade gleamed in the smooth light. Stunningly majestic, ignoring the fact, that this stag has been frequently seen in close vicinity to Will. It was like a silent and constant companion. Neither good nor bad…simply there.

He stared fixedly at the approaching stag, watching every step with great awareness. There had to be a reason for it to appear. The Nightmare Stag usually didn´t show to anybody, unless there was something special going on.

Will then carefully got up, to not to scare the dogs, with his eyes still focused on the creature outside of his window. His legs forced him to come closer to the pane and wait for the black stag to come. It seemed to be heading to Will´s house.

Indeed.

The stag´s head lingered in front of the window with only a pane separating him from Will. A pair of huge, dark eyes curiously watched him from outside. It sought eye contact.
He eyed the creature suspiciously, waiting for what the stag would do next.
Something must´ve triggered a signal for it to have gained Will´s attention. At least it seemed like it, because it suddenly turned its head westwards. But he didn´t understand what it wanted to tell him.

“I…don´t understand.”, Will breathed while keeping an eye on the animal.

The stag patiently prodded the cold evening air again, twice this time. Then it snorted and blew soft white smoke against the window pane, leaving traces of his breath on it. They

disappeared shortly after.
The town was situated westwards. But what was that supposed to mean?

The Nightmare Stag didn´t stay long, not long after bringing his message across it turned and broke into a slow trot. Merely once it decided to look back at Will, having finished its part of the puzzle. It followed its path back to the forest, towards the moon and the timeless play of colours.

Now it was Will´s turn to put the pieces of that strangely shaped puzzle together to solve the secret.

Well…he didn´t have to wait long for another clue. After Will threw a last glance at the leaving stag, something caught his eye. Following the creature´s traces trailing after its shadow, a sustained pool of blood gathered from the grass in front of his window through to the increasing distance of the stag. It mirrored in the clear moonlight and revealed its path.
It was the Nightmare Stag´s blood.

***
Earlier that day…

Bedilia became pretty uneasy thinking of the events lately. Ever since she voiced the spell to protect her only friend in town, Will Graham´s life may have become so much more enjoyable, but bearing that in mind she didn´t trust that sudden peace at all. It may be true that Hannibal refrained from stalking his victim, but that doesn´t mean anything. The evil never sleeps.

The sun had already begun to make its way down the horizon, ready to wake earth´s other half. Still it brightened the market square with its last reddish dim sunbeams. The smooth warmth of the air gently stroked Bedilia´s face as she was about to leave. She didn´t stow away her tent – simply because there was nothing valuable in it, so no one would have a good reason to sneak in it – and merely took her magic orb with her. It was actually the only object with extreme value, so she had to take good care of it. She carried it safely stored, hemmed in her arms.

Bedilia didn´t even want to imagine the tiniest bit what would happen, if her orb should break one day. Most likely she could give up her job as a fortune teller, though she possessed real magic powers, what could grant her a job at a school for theurgy students…oh well, wait and see.

As she looked around, Bedilia recognized that she was one of the last stallinholders that evening. Only a smattering of people was still busy stowing away their goods, getting ready for their next selling. Most of the venders here were straight from local town and the rest of them journeyed from one place to another. One could argue about what to think of those you never come to see twice here. Maybe they´re impostors, selling pulpy things to clueless customers, then getting away as fast as they can.
She silently watched two men loading up their unsold wares on the open carriage.

“At least I had some witnesses here.”, Bedilia thought. “Though they could not do much – if at all.”

Her face was filled with a vacant expression. She knew , people avoided her as good as possible, due to her supernatural powers. It could be fear or faith in the devil, who manipulated the villager´s minds. Everything that didn´t match their imaginings, counted as a spawn of the devil and got burnt alive. Bedilia knew, that if she didn´t watch out, she maybe would end like this someday.

No doubt, that psychological pressure was a burden to bear for her and paranoia started to rule her. And only because she thought, that the spell she put on her friend, would yield calamity. Soon.

Because in case something should happen to Will, it would be her fault all along. The fortune teller wasn´t quite sure, if she would be able to carry this burden. She was afraid of the weight crushing her back. Not only she would have lost her one and only friend, but also her reputation would suffer to no end. People would then have the ultimate prove for her being a true witch and therefore a reason to burn her in purgatory. Furthermore they would think she had caused his death…that made a shiver run down her back. Bedilia´s eyes were firmly floor-centric, while that thought chased through her brain. She swallowed discreetly and tried to hide her churning inner life. Afterwards she reached for the fanciful scarf covering her head and pulled it even deeper into her face, not wanting anyone to see the fear in her features. She eventually headed for the houses in the opposite direction of her tent, where the sun began to birth the creatures of the night, who lodged themselves between the house´s facades, curiously casting a glance at the world before their eyes. And the veiled woman headed right for it.

Her pace quickened. Even if this would appear quite suspicious to the remaining ones, Bedilia didn´t care. In this village everyone knows everyone, didn´t matter if in a good or bad sense and therefore the gossip factory has been working overtime, ever since Bedilia came here. But she let people talk what they want, most of it was just a bunch of baloney anyways. Sometimes they even framed their rumors the way they wanted to create some unbelievable truths. For their own benefit.

Bedilia imagined those filthy villagers, sitting in that overcrowded and close inn, festively raising their beers with deafening atmosphere. The mere thought disgusted her. Not only that because of the slopping over of the beer much liquid got wasted, but also because of the people, who followed that custom. She, for her share, preferred a peccable glass of wine she wittingly enjoyed in the evening after a long day. Maybe that´s why she wasn´t that welcome here, she was different.

With that thought bothering her mind, she finally disappeared in the shadows of the upcoming night. It was her last one, before a strong hand unexpectedly pressed against Bedilia´s mouth. It happened so quickly, she wasn´t even able to let out a short shriek, only her heart skipped a beat and hot pain ran through her veins. She immediately tried to fight her captor with all her strength, kicking around, hoping he would let her go, but unfortunately she didn´t even think about her orb that moment. In a split of a second it hit the floor with force and shattered in thousands of pieces with a precise clinking. Her only hope was gone now, that orb, now worth nothing, laid scattered in all directions in front of her feet, like the pieces of a puzzle. She let out a shocked gasp that was choked by her tormentor´s grip. Tears began to fill her eyes until an untamed sobbing filled the alley. She closed her eyes, hoping it was

all just a bad dream. No, that nightmare has just begun. Bedilia whimpered and cried awkwardly, looking lost with her eyes wet and red, still trying to break free from the strong grip.

But the stranger didn´t seem to be swayed by that and quickly pulled a hand over her torso to drag her deeper into the darkness.

***

“I fancy playing with you…so the next part of my game will be who will find who first…”

Will read the line once again.

“Look for the stars where the shadows are born at night…”

The magician again left a message for Will. This time even less dramatic than last time, less blood and no real threat in his words. Still he was startled, having received such a seemingly random message once more. His fingers slightly shook as he laid the yellowed piece of paper back on sill. Today it hung in the middle of the window, from which Will saw the Nightmare Stag approaching yesterday. Was it some strange coincidence or rather part of the plan that Hannibal Lecter pursued?

Will lifted his eyes up to watch the scenery in front of his window. His gaze wandered from the healthily shining grass up to the mysteriously shadowed woods. It somehow was always dark in there though the sun shone brightly that day. He seriously wondered, if the magician could hint at the forest…

But that wouldn´t make sense. Darkness builds its realms everywhere the sun sets. Darkness´ realms…Will paused. Darkness´ realms.

It was impossible that this should hint at a forest. No. The magician wanted Will to look for him, maybe even a castle. Hannibal was not stupid, not at all. He may lingered around in woods and near the village to snatch one or two inhabitants and if he had stayed in that area, he would have been caught in no time. So he needed a more specific hiding place. Something hidden and pretentious, that matched his style. Even black magic itself has much in common with darkness…

Will closed his eyes and tried to complete the answers. A sharp but brief sound washed over him, his vision flashing and soon he found himself looking through the eyes of Hannibal.

"Breaking in the house was not a big deal. It demanded one of my simplest spells to pick the lock and enter the inside. Last time I chose the message congenial to the theme. The tale of the hunter and the prey. A bloody butcher knife besides the paper made it look like a masterpiece with a special background story. This time I looked for something new. A new piece of art. The window seemed perfect for the second message. All part of my game. The view from out the window revealed wide fields and woods and was just ideal for a game of hide and seek. From here one could see nearly everything going on, except it fled in the woods to hide behind the trees. Then it was time to play on. There always had to be one who loses or wins. I want to win. This is my design."

"
Slowly the information whirling around began to ground and revealed a complete picture. The message, Hannibal had left on Will´s window merely was allusion. A metaphorical piece of the puzzle. Yet he had to find out what the stars were meant to be.

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One week later…
As Will Graham reached the market place in the late afternoon, intending to speak with Bedilia about the note he has found, he didn´t come upon that cozy atmosphere, he´d expected. He was confronted with the exact opposite. Half of the village community has gathered around the middle of the place, partly aghast faces, partly silently watching expressions staring at one certain woman, protruding from the crowd.
She wore chin-length, black hair and a remarkably red lipstick, arousing the attention of the people with gushing gestures. Regina Mills…the mayor.

"…the proof, that this woman only wanted to harm our folk. That is confirmed by her disappearance lately. Gone without a trace. Who knows, if she´s on the run? Could it be that she finally saw it coming, that we will dash her powers into dust?"

The crowd broke out in massive agreement. Some even raised their arms concurringly and screamed their minds to the heavens.
"Bedilia du Maurier…a simple, innocent fortune teller or do we actually underestimate her? Or is she in truth…a witch?"

After Regina spat Bedilia´s name out like she was worth nothing, Will raised his voice and halted her in her speech.
"Regina Mills! Don´t you dare talking about that woman like that around me!", he thundered.

The extent of his words lead to that hundreds of eyes were now firmly directed at Will. The thick of the action has been immediately taken up by him and Regina seemed quite off-guard by Will stealing the show. She lifted her head in surprise and quirked an eyebrow, frowning.

"My, my…look who we have here. Will Graham. You don´t seriously want to tell me, that you really plan to come to that…scryer´s defense?", she derogatory gesticulated with her hand , speaking out the word "scryer".

"I assume you´re also one of them, right?", a grey haired man suddenly approached.
"You´re probably a magician yourself!", another one claimed .

Since Will didn´t answered these aspersions, the man, having assumed him for the affiliation, now came dangerously close, raising his fist. Will instantly backed away to save himself from possible injuries. He really couldn´t need that right now. But the man hauled off and missed Will by a hair. Will´s eyes were fixed on the hand, his expression filled with fright.

"Damn!", the man hissed. Will watched him horrified, his breath stuck in his neck. The other one laid his head to the side, the tauted hair fell into his raging face. Then the man turned his gaze again to face Will with fury burning in his eyes.

“Come on, boy, run! Run, before I change my mind!”, he snarled, the curves of his lips showing parts of his teeth.

Will turned his head and gazed over to the houses nearby, where a narrow alley led through. He was thinking of somewhere to run to, or else that insane guy would rip him apart. A sparkle over there, between those two houses where the alley was situated, caught Will´s attention.

Look for the stars, where the shadows are born at night…

“But let me tell you one thing. If I ever happen to see you here in this village, then I´ll…” The man didn´t even have to finish his sentence for Will to know, what would await him if he dared to come back, seeing the anger in the people´s faces.

Then, eventually, Will ran. He wanted to leave this place as fast as possible, even more with the hatred of the people and Regina´s deprecating stare following him until he reached the alley. After many, seemingly endless seconds, he finally was able to hide between the two houses. He didn´t stop at the edge, but slid even further into the dark. Having made sure, they thought he was gone for good, he now investigated that strange sparkling, he saw before. It must´ve reflected in the sunlight, there´s no other way he could have seen it. Though it was already pretty dark in this alley.
Will bent down and picked up a random piece of the unknown object, carefully considering it. It looked like glass and after he took one of the sharply edged splitters, he had to ascertain that the material even felt like it.

But in all honesty, this could impossibly be any kind of glass. No matter how Will looked at it, the texture was way too milky and its colour was some rare shade of blue. Furthermore the pieces were shrouded in a very light mist, that didn´t seem to vanish, as Will discovered.

Suddenly, there was something else Will noticed. That misty shroud, originate from the glass-like splitters on the floor, seemed to follow a clear direction. He first inspected with his eyes, following its path. They led deeper into the darkness.

Will Graham has just found the stars.

Deer hunting

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The farther the mist led him into the forest the more he realised, that something must have gone clearly wrong. Before having found the shattered pieces of her magic orb, Bedilia namely was nowhere to be seen.
The fact of her being kidnapped could not be excluded. But the question is, who in this village would have approached such an action that cowardly? Of course it´s not a secret, that Bedilia is avoided because of her critical reputation as a witch. Therefore the average would rather pretend not having seen anything instead of helping if she had been attacked in the middle of the street. And yet there must be someone who didn´t want to arouse attention to the common ruck.

Despite everything the villagers, especially the mayor, noticed her sudden disappearance. It seemed as if the witch has been successfully exiled. That should´ve been a reason to celebrate their victory, but instead they showed their anger towards the fortune teller.

So it must´ve been Bedilia´s orb, Will found in the dark alley. He had no more doubt on that as he followed the strange blue mist through the forest. His guided light as one might say. By now Will has left the majority of the forest behind and with that, valuable light sources. Luckily he had the mysterious mist´s smooth light helping him to find a way through the woods. He hadn´t had any other choice either. If he had stayed in the village, he wouldn´t want to imagine what would have happened. He counted as the witch´s friend and therefore he must´ve also been a wizard all along. But he couldn´t prove them otherwise either.

Branches and dry leaves crunched under his feet. Will didn´t dare to look back, he was too afraid of something being behind him. Which was nonsense of course, but the thought alone compelled him to run deeper into the forest.

The blue path didn´t seem to end any time soon. It wandered on and winded through the heavily vegetated forest.
When suddenly the mist started to fade the farther Will followed it. Its blue colour became thinner and finally faded away completely.
Will started to look around, hoping it had just found an abrupt end. The trace was gone.

So he stood there, darkness slowly starting to consume his fear.

There was this slight feeling of helplessness inside of him. Panic gripped him. Nevertheless he started to move forward and find his way out by himself. He had to use his hands to see the trees before him and therefore he couldn´t move forward as fast. How could a forest even be that dark when the sun was still shining?

The forest began to thin out it seemed. Will didn´t bump in as many trees as some time ago, so maybe he was going the right way. According to the thickness of the forest, he should soon

arrive the clearing.
Eventually it turned out that he was right.

Will had found a way out of the forest and in addition to that a shore, about half a mile from his position. The water sparkled like hundreds of diamonds in the light of the setting sun. Besides was a huge cliff towering above both the sun and the sea. A seemingly abandoned old castle graced the scenery. How poetic.
***
It didn´t take much. Two ingredients were all that was necessary. He took charcoal and laid lavender as well as rosemary on top of it to start the process. With a small piece of wood he lighted with the nearby candle, he eventually let the ritual unfold its power. The more intense the herbal scent, the better the hex would work. Nothing could stop him now.

Later that day…

A smooth sonata filled the air. Hannibal Lecter played the piano as if he had become one with it. His fingers stroked over the ivories and his eyes were closed as he played the piece. He indeed was a talented, soulful musician, but at the same time also a cannibalistic murderer.

There were always two sides of every story.

Bedilia watched him closely from her position. With her hands bound behind her back, she sat in a baroque armchair, which perfectly matched the furnishing.
Whatever game Hannibal might play, Bedilia wanted to be at least one step ahead. It was just like chess, but with the handicap of being hogtied. Quite literally.

All part of the plan, because Hannibal always wins.

She made a small move to sit straight again, what immediately alerted the henchman supervising her. A young man, wearing the typical pirate styled coat and boots with lots of rings and a small earring on one ear. He darted a cautionary glance at Bedilia.

She just wanted to know the truth and why she was brought here.

“Hannibal…” her husky voice sounded.

After a brief moment of silence she continued.

“Just tell me why. I´m not the person of your desire.”

Eventually the music stopped.

Hannibal rose his head and met her gaze, his eyes still dreamy and caught in the sound of the music. He looked calm. Bedilia was not.
“Tell me, what makes him so precious to you?”

Hannibal ignored her question and instead started to continue the composition from where he stopped.
Once more the sweet melody began to play. Cheerful and yet so melancholic.

“You´re my bait…”

Bedilia didn´t show any expression, but understood his answer well enough.

“Hook, would you be so kind and bring our captive back to her chamber?”
Chamber? What a nice way to say prison cell.

The captain did as he was told and grabbed the blonde fortune teller´s arm, pulled her out of the armchair and led her down the long corridor. Bedilia didn´t put up a fight at all.
In the meantime, Hannibal closed the piano lid and arose from the stool, briefly adjusted his suit and pulling a dagger he hid inside his jacket. He watched Hook and their captive for a few seconds before he eventually left the room with the knife in his hand.

***
Of course all gates were shut. They wouldn´t even budge when trying to open them.

But luckily Will had found a rusty keychain, ridiculously hidden on a tree nearby. It really wasn´t hard to overlook them, you had to be either blind or ignore them deliberately to not to see them. Though most of the keys he tried on the gates he found didn´t fit in the hole. The main gate would have been way too dangerous either way, because there were two guards watching it. And those were the only ones around there, which was actually strange. There were several possibilities for someone to gain access to the castle´s inside, but no guards pounding this beat. But apparently the two guards were only fake. Not to mention where the keys were hidden.

He somehow had the feeling of being awaited.

Well, didn´t matter anyways.

Will searched for windows or doors to get inside, but with no avail. Only one door was left, he didn´t try to open before. Praying one of the keys would fit, he eagerly tried every single one of them out until one of them successfully opened the gate. He carefully pushed the door open with a soft creaking and immediately closed it, as he arrived the inside. Then he stuffed the keys in his trouser pocket. The other ones wouldn´t exist without a good reason anyways.

The air inside of the castle was chilly; the brick walls only added to the cold feeling in here. A classic carpet led his gaze straight forward where a slightly bigger wooden gate separated the corridor from another room. Besides, there were several doors, that led god knows where. Candles on the wall generously lightened it up, but didn´t warm the air by the slightest.

Now that he had to make a choice, he wondered if he should follow the corridor to the wooden gate or start with exploring some of the rooms. Maybe Will would even find Bedilia here. At least that mist led him right here.

Eventually he headed for the door to his left.

It was quite small with nothing special to be found in. Some shelfs on the wall with several books and strange glass mugs were all they included. But whoever owned this castle must have had a sense for tidiness.

With a small oval window offering an outlook to the sea, Will saw a desk standing right before that window. He took a closer look at it and recognized many Latin sentences engraved in its wood. It seemed to be a pretty ancient desk. A tall candle holder was placed on one end of the desk, five candles burning, and a thick dusty book laid in front of it. Will sat in the chair, that leaned against the desk and began to read the title.

“Black magic”

Will felt something stir inside his chest, but still decided to open the book, driven by his curiosity. Black magic…spells…Hannibal Lecter.

He flipped through its pages, reading single words every now and then. Entries about demons, pentagrams and voodoo spells as well as some sketches of evil spirits caught his eye.

One thing though suddenly aroused his attention more than anything else on this book.

The page he just opened was about how to break a protection spell.

Will´s eyes were firmly fixed on those words. Written in a scrawly looking handwriting across the paper the instructions were listed. For breaking such a spell you only had to use a piece of charcoal and dried herbs. He got a strange feeling about this. That could only mean one thing…

He then recognized lavender and rosemary besides the book. They laid burned black and strayed around the charcoal. He could tell by the smell of the herbs. It seemed as if that ritual was carried out some time ago.

Knowing what this could mean, Will decided to stand up and leave this place. Bedilia was a tough woman anyways, so she could take care of herself as long as he couldn´t find a way to save her. Beating retreat was the wisest step to do for now.

As far as Will was concerned the spell, Bedilia put on him to protect him from Hannibal, must have lost his power due to the remains of the ritual he just found.
Will slowly tried to abscond, searching backwards for the door he came through. He had his gaze fixed on the still opened book and the burned herbs. Now seeing it all united in one picture, his theory made sense. The book, the curse breaking,… Hannibal knew exactly what to do. He wanted Will to come here. It was all part of the plan. He really wasn´t safe in there, he had to try getting out without being seen. Damn.
Suddenly he was held up by something.

He felt the material under his fingers. Will expected it to be the cold stone wall or the door.

None of that was it. He prayed for it only being his imagination tricking him.

His heart skipped as he felt velvet fabric on his skin. No, this couldn´t be. Please.

Will stopped moving immediately and held his breath, shocked. Eventually he dared to turn around and face whoever was behind him.

He looked straight into the magician´s maroon eyes. Hannibal´s expression was filled with anger, almost taunting. Will merely stared back fearfully, unable to move or talk.
Then Hannibal lifted his hand and started to caress the intruder´s cheek. Adrenaline was pumping through his veins and he could hear his heart beating loudly out of his chest. Will just stared back at the magician, confused and not knowing how to cope with that situation.

All of a sudden Will felt an extremely intense pain in his lower body. His breathing intensified and his face was contorted with pain as Will clutched his hands on his belly where a huge gaping wound tore his body apart. He tried to stop the bleeding with his hands but to no avail. The warm and sticky liquid continued flowing nevertheless.

Hannibal then violently pulled the knife out of his victim´s body. Will couldn´t keep back a muffled cry of pain as the knife left his body. Tears now forming tiny rivers on his face, he struggled with the blood loss.
Due to the blood Will was losing, he slowly began to struggle with his balance. His eyes started to blur, not only from the tears – he lost control over his body. Arms and legs began to grow weak to a point Hannibal felt Will losing consciousness in his deadly embrace.
His muscles weren´t as tensed anymore and the sobbing had stopped. The magician stowed the bloody dagger in his pocket and carefully laid Will´s lifeless body down to the ground. Checking his breathing, he saw that Will´s eyes were still opened a tiny bit.

Their gazes met one more time. Though Will hadn´t the strength to speak, he did so with his eyes.

“Why…why did you do this?”, they seemed to tell Hannibal.

“Just close your eyes and wade into the quiet of the stream.” Hannibal answered softly.

Of course he was well aware of his actions as he looked down at his victim laying there, bleeding to death. The blonde , though, merely cleaned the knife with the handkerchief he got out of his breast pocket.
He took a look at the injuries he caused. It was a pretty deep cut, he probably even harmed some of his organs. But Hannibal kept a straight face, stuffing the handkerchief back into his suit. He couldn´t even tell if he would survive the gutting.

“Hook”, he called his servant.

A little later, the captain entered the room. Judging by the look on his face, he´d thought of anything else but this to await him. A bleeding man on the floor with a huge cut on his lower body.
“Bring our new captive down to the prison cells.”, Hannibal ordered while leaving the scene.

Terrified, Hook protested: “W-wait sir! We need to stop this man from bleeding to death! By goodness, what did you just do to him?”

He halted right before door, his hand already touching the doorknob.

“There must be some bandages stowed around here. If you feel the need to save our new prisoner´s life, I hope you´ll succeed in your purposes.”

As he said that, Hannibal´s voice was as calm as if nothing had happened. Any other person would just lose their heads by the mere thought of seeing a dead person, but not him.

So Hannibal left.

“Nobody shall dare to stultify me.”

Chapter End Notes

Handkerchiefs anyone? ;-;

Anyways, I wanted to thank you so much for all the kudos and kind words on this fanfic so far. This really motivates me to keep on writing it. There may be - sadly - only one or two (or three?) chapters left, but I'm already looking forward to write them.
Here, have some hugs (>^.^)>

Next chapter is a bit tricky to write, ´cuz I have to think of a little bit of storyline y ´know. I don´t want to spoiler anything so I better keep this short: this might take another while to write!
I´m just currently looking for a newcomer *cough* okay enough spoiler for today *cough*

Storytime

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

His eyes began to flutter seconds before he carefully opened them. To embrace the light of his eye and thank the lord for letting him survive. He felt his head resting against a dank stone wall. The air was cool and his surroundings twilit.

Slowly he regained control over his own body, he felt the blood starting to flow through his veins again. Will was still stricken from the attack, but his condition seemed to better. Though pain would be his constant companion from now on – as he tried to sit up straight, a sharp twitch violently shot through his body.

He flinched and reflexively covered the wound with one hand, wanting to mitigate the pain, as he felt a soft fabric underneath his fingers. Somebody apparently bound him up.

Will hadn´t expected that much sympathy.

His head also ached. It was a throbbing pain.

He then led a hand to his hair and massaged his scalp, whereby he felt something sticky on his fingertips. Carefully he combed through his curls hoping to detach it. Will held his hand before his eyes and discovered traces of dried blood on his fingers.
He watched them for a while.

Yes, now he remembered what happened.

Hannibal had gutted him with a knife, then laid him on the bloody floor to let him die. The memory made Will shiver. But that was all he could remember, after the stabbing he became unconscious. However, there must have been someone who has taken care of him. Bedilia? No, that was impossible. She had been imprisoned by the time Will had his encounter with Hannibal.
Will leant his head against the cold wall, admiring his not very generously designed cell. There was nothing more than an old bucket filled with water, standing nearby the wall, and the thick bars preventing him from escaping. Everything was dark, cold and filthy.

Across from his own there was another cell, unfortunately illuminated just as spare. Even despite the torches that hung in the hallway it was pretty dark.

However he got almost scared to death as he suddenly saw a pair of eyes silently staring at him from the dark. As his eyes got used to the dark surroundings, he even saw a figure sitting in the dark.
Driven by his curiosity Will tried to stand up while grabbing the wall for help. The pain made him flinch, but he ignored it as well as in any way possible. Finally though he had managed to stand on his own two feet again and took a few steps forward while one hand guided his unsteady tread.

After a painful walk he was able to grab the gate and hold onto it. He narrowed his eyes, trying to identify the person across.

The stranger got closer.

“Bedilia? Is that you?”

Will´s eyes filled with tears of joy. He was worried about his friend´s fate, but luckily he was able to see her alive and well.

“My dear Will…”, her husky voice sounded as she appeared in the torch´s light.

“What have you just gotten yourself into? If I had had the chance to warn you in any way, I would have done it. It was a trap.”

Bedilia casted a quick glance at both sides of the narrow hallway separating the two cells.

“Now we´re both stuck here in Hannibal´s captivity. But you´re not to be blamed for that - you came to rescue me and that should be counted as an excuse.”
The corners of her mouth showed a tiny smile that only lasted for a few seconds.

Will´s face remained blank. He saw the look in her eyes and felt guilty. Desperately he shook his head, facing the floor with his lips pursed.

“Please forgive me. But you have to understand that you´re the only one I can trust. I haven´t seen you anywhere near the town square so I began to worry about you. The villagers then drummed me out of the village, threatening me. They think I also possess magical powers.” He snorted in disbelief.

“Then I found your shattered orb.”

Bedilia nodded understandingly.

“They´re all just slaves of their own mayor. Regina and I are the greatest rivals, you must know. She is also capable of magic, however no one knows that except for me. Black magic. She´s a real witch herself, my dear.”

She clung to the bars and looked at Will.

“She manipulates her folk to win on power.”

“Why…?”

Bedilia hummed. “It all began many years ago – a longer story if I might add – so I want you to listen carefully. Long time ago there lived dozens of magicians, fortune tellers with supernatural powers and even elves as well as trolls were said to affect the village the two of us once called home. Magic had been a part of the people´s everyday life. A highly esteemed magician guaranteed the village´s safety and mastered powerful spells to protect his folk. Therefore he was loved and even had people who came to him with great sorrows, hoping he could help them. He was called Mr. Gold. But then Regina came in…”

Suddenly steps sounded and echoed through every inch of the prison. Bedilia stiffened and seemed to await the person approaching. She gave Will a short, yet intense look.

“I´ll tell you the whole story when there´s time to.”, she whispered.

Moments later Hook appeared in the hallway. He didn´t say a single word, but just headed right to Will´s cell like being in trance, opening it with a ring of rusty keys.

“Hannibal wants to see you.”, he then blandly announced, holding open the gate to clear the way for Will. As he hesitated to follow the instructions, Hook ironically nodded with a fake smile and closed eyes.

“Come on now, you owe me your life. If I hadn´t bound you up, you would have bled to death. You should accommodate me a little after what I have done for you.”
Hooks gaze darkened. It became threatening and demanding.

“Now follow me. My master is awaiting you and I´m not keen on getting into trouble because of you. If Hannibal namely would have had his way, you were dead by now…”

Eventually Will gave in. He had no other choice but to follow the instructions of his captors. Or else he´d probably have another knife stabbing him sooner as he preferred.

“…and most likely be prepared as a dish for the next dinner”, Hook added in silence.

***

“Kneel down, prisoner!”, a deep voice demanded.

Hook kicked Will´s legs so he fell on his knees, now sitting as he was told to. His breathing was loud and a bitter gaze awaited the one asking for him.

Hannibal approached, planting himself in front of Will and returned a disapproving look in his eyes. The magician´s haunting aura made it hard for Will not to cringe at the pure evil in Hannibal´s face. It felt like he could stare into his very soul.

“How dare you…”, Hannibal hissed.

“You sneak in my castle, pry around in my books, but…for what reason, Mr. Graham?”
By the end of the sentence his voice calmed. Still his anger was not to be unheard.

He eventually turned his back on his prisoner and cautiously headed towards the piano, standing not more than a few feet away from them. Will silently expected the worst to come – you never knew what this man had in mind. Would he pull another knife? Or worse?

Hannibal gently caressed the dark, noble wood of the instrument. It felt smooth, almost as delicate as the meat he always prepared for dinner. As his standard demanded, it was home-reared with greatest care. His thoughts wandered to the villagers, knowing of his preferences and how they strictly warn not to cross his way. What a pity.

Luckily he had found another victim. The thought pleased him.

“Hook, I think tonight is the perfect night to celebrate!”, Hannibal announced with a sinister smile.

“Would you be so kind and bring our prisoner to the kitchen?”

Before Will could say anything, he was yanked up by Hook and dragged out of the room.

As soon as the both of them left the piano room and headed towards another wooden door that lead back down to the prison cells, Will confronted Hannibal´s henchman.

“What is the point of that, huh? Does he now like want to cook me like the ones before me? Bedilia told me everything about Hannibal. God, I should have listened to her!” Will angrily hissed at Hook, though the fear in his voice was audible.

“You should have been careful what to wish for.” Hook calmly responded, not meeting his eye. He closed the door behind them.

“Hannibal specifically chooses the ones finding themselves in a current, unbearable situation in life. Believe it or not, those people would give anything to get rid of that. Just like you giving him your life in return.”

These words made Will seriously think about how foolish he had been. But he didn´t want to die. Not like that.

He tried to break free from Hook´s grasp, but to no avail.

“And why did you save my life as Hannibal stabbed me and left me to die on the floor?”

Will received no answer. He snorted annoyed.

“I felt sorry for you”, was the answer eventually.

The prisoner gave Hook a confused look.

“Listen. I know how it feels to see somebody die. You would have done the same, if you had ever experienced that. So let me tell you something, please…”

Hook´s pace became slower, until he completely interrupted the walk. His eyes met the floor. He sighed before he began to speak.

“Many years ago I have made a terrible mistake by looking for Hannibal Lecter. Back then I was helping my dad out in our fishery, customers loved our fish and so the trade was thriving. Until one day rumours went around, that the water our fish came from was supposedly polluted. Of course it then was impossible to prove them otherwise, so it didn´t take long and we went broke.”

His voice shook and he let go of Will´s arm, begging him not to do anything foolish now.

“I just want to tell you my story. It is something I think is important for you to know. Please.”

Will looked at his tormented face. His empathy told him that Hook´s intentions were good. So he stayed and listened to what he had to say.

“Anyways, I then heard people talking about a miracle magician named Hannibal Lecter. They said he could fulfill every wish without you having to say a single word. Foolish and in need as I was, I started to look for him. In the end…I couldn´t have known he also wanted something in return – namely my life.”

The henchman took a deep breath and continued his story.

“As he then came to visit me, the trade was just as good as it used to be. But Hannibal hadn´t come for the fish. Of course I refused to give him my life and so he threatened me. He said that if I didn´t pay the price for my demands within two days, he would make sure to make my family´s life hell on earth. For fear of Hannibal I decided to flee. I quickly grabbed my most important belongings and provisions and stole one of our fishing boats to go on the run. After the two days have passed, fear had gripped me once again. I knew, that he would look for me when he wouldn´t find me in the cottage. Well, he would have found me sooner or later. His punishment…I returned to my family, worried about their wellbeing…then…I found them all dead. He took out the organs of every single one of them. Then he forced me to serve him for the rest of my life, so here I am now. God, I was so egoistic.”

For a short moment there was silence filling the air.

“Isn´t there any way to stop him?”, Will asked with a firm expression.

The pirate slowly shook his head. “No. Not that I know of. But even if, I could not tell you or else Hannibal would kill me.”

Of course.
Then Hook cautiously watched his back.

“I better bring you to the kitchen now, before Hannibal overhears our conversation.”

***

In the meantime, Bedilia spent the time alone in her cell. Though loneliness wasn´t the worst thing she had to bear in the dark and creepy catacombs. She feared for Will´s life. Scared of what Hannibal could possibly do to him. She silently prayed for her friend.

Black magic should never be underestimated. Bedilia has learned that herself in the past few years in her career as a fortune teller. Several times her spells had been broken by the power of this kind of magic, unfortunately the one she put on Will was one of them. She knew that because of the generously bandaged wound on his lower torso told her so. That could´ve only meant that Hannibal somehow managed to break the protection spell and tried to kill Will.

Bedilia realized that she had to step in. However, there was too little time for making exact plans, so she simply sneaked to the bars of her cell, carefully watching out for any guards. As she couldn´t spot anyone on the hallway, she started whispering a magic spell that allowed

her to break the padlock. With a dead cracking sound it eventually fell down to the floor, scattered in pieces.

How foolish to let his prisoners unguarded…well, luckily for Bedilia´s advantage.

Once more she checked her surroundings for wardens before finally starting to run off in the direction Hook had gone with Will.

All of this had to have an end somehow and she knew exactly that there was only one way to do this.

***

In the meantime, Hook was just busy chaining Will up on the kitchen´s wall by manacling him. Will was silent in the whole process, but definitely sensed that Hook was uncomfortable with exposing him to Hannibal´s anger.

The kitchen was spacious. In the middle there was a large wooden table with a butcher knife stuck on the surface, a fresh looking piece of meat right next to it. He couldn´t quite identify the animal, but he suspected it to be one of Hannibal´s former victims.

Moreover there were vegetables spread across the table as well as pans, pots and other various kinds of knives hanging from the ceiling above. The wall on the opposite side was adorned with various body parts hanging from meat hooks. Human arms and legs were the most common to spot. Will wondered where Hannibal stowed the organs.

Eventually, Hook finished shackling Will and stepped aside. Their eyes met in silence, while the captive gazed right into a face twisted with guilt.

“Hannibal will arrive soon. Don´t be scared though, I haven´t locked your chains. To him they will look as if they are and that´s what will save you; it´ll allow you to free yourself and fight back. But don´t you dare waste any words on that!”

“Thank you. For helping me. And for saving my life.” Will forced a smile and carefully checked his chains. They clanged quietly.

“But…what about you? What would you do, if Hannibal found out about your betrayal?” he added.

Actually it was quite paradox to thank Hook, after all he was the one chaining Will up for the cannibal. For giving him the opportunity to cherish his tastes.

“I´ll find a way to prevent that…hopefully.”

These were Hook´s last words before he suddenly left the room through a second door that was situated a few feet away from Will. He watched him leave and felt the fear shooting through his body, scared of what would happen if he failed to survive Hannibal a second time.

Will wasn´t quite sure of that. There´s just yes or no. It´s either living or dying. He wasn´t sure whether he was able to survive this encounter due to Hannibal´s seemingly immense bloodthirst. Especially because he even announced dinner with the henchman. Worst of all was, though, that Will had only one chance to escape. He´d either manage it and find Bedilia or Hannibal would tear him apart.

He saw the dead meat hanging from the wall across. Arms, legs and other body parts were waiting to get prepared for a cannibalistic meal. Just imagining that all these once belonged to a living human being made his own muscles twitch uncomfortably.

The thought of him being served next on Hannibal´s dinner frightened him. So he swore to himself to find the strength he needed to face him.
Then he heard footsteps from outside. They seemed to come closer.

His heartbeat made huge jumps inside his chest, powering every part of his body for the approaching fight.
Hannibal entered the room.

Now Will had to fight with all his might. All or nothing.

***

Bedilia ran through the castle as fast as her legs could carry her. Her floor-length garment, however, proved to be quite the burden while running.
She whirled through the winding hallways, searching for Will. Only god knew, what they could have done to him by now. Be that as it may, she couldn´t afford being too late – she had to prevent the worst from happening.

As she then approached the end of the hallway that met with a horizontally leading one, Bedilia slowed her pace to observe the path before proceeding. In the meantime, she tried to catch her breath as silently as possible. This proved to be a wise move, because it didn´t take long for her to hear footsteps coming from the other hallway.

She pressed her body against the wall, hoping to be well hidden in at least the slightest of shadows, that the elegant candles casted, and not to be seen by the stranger. One of her hands covered her mouth while she waited tensely.

The person approached Bedilia and as the steps sounded close enough, she stormed out of her hiding spot, grabbing the stranger´s wrists and pinned them to the wall, thus preventing her opponent from turning the table. Then she looked at his face – it was Hannibal´s servant Hook. What a lucky coincidence.

Hook stared at her, terrified, but his mouth refused to use words in order to ask what´s going on.

“Where is Will Graham?”, Bedilia demanded with threat in her voice.

Instead of answering, he tried to escape her grasp, but she was stronger than she looked. For Bedilia, however, it was an obvious sign that he knew something. To demonstrate her

dominance, she increased the pressure on his arms what caused Hook to flinch in pain.

“I know that you are hiding information from me.”

She looked him straight in the eye. Hook tried to avoid her gaze.

“Speak or I´ll have to cause you more pain. It is your choice.”

“My master will kill me, should I dare to betray him.”

Bedilia narrowed her eyes.
“If I was you, I would do what I am told to do. And believe me, Hannibal´s punishment wouldn´t be even close to be as cruel as mine.”

Her warning let Hook no way out of this. He became insecure and with scared eyes meeting Bedlia´s, Hook eventually gave in.

“He…wanted me to bring him to the k-kitchen…” he paused.

“Tell me the way!”

“…follow this hallway until you arrive at the large wooden door. Behind it, you´ll find the hall with the piano, which I´m sure you remember, then you have to follow the way to the catacombs. In front of the stairs that lead down to the prison cells, you´ll see a few doors. Take the one to your right, it´s the only one there and you´ll find the kitchen.”

Bedilia had a hard time internalizing his directions due to his hasty speaking, but he saved his own skin by helping her. So she let that count.

She then let go of Hook´s wrists, which he immediately began to knead.
Bedilia was about to run off, before she stopped and turned towards Hook.

“You better come with me. I don´t want you to get into mischief.”

Not wanting to get into further trouble with her, he followed her instructions and came with her.

“And should you still dare to tell Hannibal anything…don´t even think about it.”

With that, she bustled off, while Hook had difficulties keeping up with her.

***

He had to find Bedilia.

Thanks to Hook, Will had managed to break free from his chains while Hannibal tried to attack him.
However, the cannibal was way stronger and taller than he was himself, what turned the fight into quite the challenge. Still, Will had managed to dodge some of Hannibal´s attacks and

used an opportune moment to quickly grab the next best thing for his defence, which turned out to be a shabby broom.

What a ridiculous thing to fight with, regarding his opponent.

Hannibal smirked at the sight. No doubt he enjoyed playing with his food. Instead of repeating the scenario in his black magic office, he preferred to stalk him around the room this time. Skillfully waving around his knife he hadn´t intended to hurt his victim, but merely frighten it.

Frightened meat always had that special consistency to the cannibal.

After a short time of warding off attacks, Will realized he had no chance against Hannibal. There was no way he could defeat him with a broom. His only chance was getting to the back door, where Hook had left him before.

Will rammed his broom in Hannibal´s lower torso, making him flinch from the pain and disabling him for a short moment, which Will used to make a run for the door. He closed it right after.
Another huge room greeted him with a long table and chairs in the middle of it. Candles on the wall and huge portraits of ancient people and also the Last Supper caught Will´s eye. He hurried towards the next room as he heard noises from behind the door.

It was a living room, not much difference in standard from everything he had seen so far. Candles and splendid furniture – Hannibal lived like a king.
A small chair was seemingly uselessly standing close to the door, so Will decided to use it to block the way. Hannibal would find Will anyways, but at least it prevented him from being too close for now.
Reaching the next location, he found himself in a quite familiar place. It was the hallway Will had reached access to the castle from. Where he found out about the magician´s spell book and almost met his end. At least he now had the advantage of knowing where to go to find and rescue Bedilia.

It was time to finally put an end to this nightmare.

Chapter End Notes

It´s been a while since I last updated, eh? ^^`
Anyways, I took notes and thought about how this story could possibly go on and I got some nice ideas already...also I apologise in advance if there are any mistakes. I read the chapter several times but since english isn´t my first language, grammatical mistakes might occur.
Thanks for reading <3

Oh and before I forget, I´ll be working on a little map for Hannibal´s castle. I have a feeling that its description might be a little bit confusing sometimes, therefore I´ll draw a

map as soon as possible. You´ll find it on my DeviantArt page then :)

There we go - here´s a small sketch of how Hannibal´s castle looks:
https://tamira189.deviantart.com/art/Hannibals-Castle-690665777

Decision

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

One could have called it fate.

Before Will even reached the stairs leading down to the prison cells, the door to his right was suddenly cautiously opened and for a moment his heart dived. He feared for the worst, especially because Hannibal knew this castle way better than he himself. Any secret passages or shortcuts were unknown to him while his opponent could easily use them to his advantage.

Will took a few steps back, mentally preparing for an unwanted reencounter with Hannibal, but instead of an elegant cannibal a long gown with blond hair carefully squeezed through the narrow opening.
Bedilia.

She had somehow managed to escape her cell. It seemed like their captors have forgotten her magical powers, allowing her to break free from her prison. Or they underestimated her. Anyways, thank god she made it without getting caught.

Relieved and happy to see Bedilia safe and sound, Will approached her and hugged her from behind without saying a word. Of course she was startled by arms that suddenly wrapped around her, but as she turned her head to see her friend Will who also made it back alive, her worries were gone and she returned the gesture.

“My god, Will…” was everything Bedilia managed to say before the nascent joy of reunion choked her words.
But another person followed her shortly after. It was Hook, whom Will immediately recognized.

“What are you doing here?”

Will´s mind started to brood over dozens of scenarios of why Bedilia and Hook sneaked through the castle together without her being treated like a captive. Were they working together? Did Hook want to help Bedilia as well? But for what purpose? And most importantly…why?
The fortune teller sensed her friend´s confusion and thus wised him up. She placed a hand on his shoulders and explained Will everything he needed to know about what had happened. She told him about how she used one of her spells to escape her prison to look for him and how she ran right into Hannibal´s servant, forcing him to join her without telling his master anything.

As they both looked over to Hook he simply shrugged in agreement.

Will shoved the blond woman´s hand off and took a few steps towards the other.
After the pirate had brought him to the kitchen, he said that he felt sorry for Will. This guy

said that because he once was caught in the same misery as Will was today. But what had Bedilia to do with all of this? Why would he help a prisoner of his own volition?

The servant awaited Will´s next action with slight unease.

“You…what do you want? Why do you help Bedilia and me escape from this castle? Is this part of what Hannibal has planned for us? I thought-“
“No.”
Will paused.
Hook sighed and met his gaze with a firm expression.
“I knew you would become wary at some point. Don´t worry, however, nothing I´ve done involves Hannibal´s knowledge. Actually you´d have to thank me, without me you would have never made it this far.“

Silence.

But then the thought of Hannibal being out here looking for him crossed Will´s mind. In the open of the hallway the three of them were fair game.
Will barely hesitated and informed the others about what they had to know.

“Hook, before you elucidate us you better bring us somewhere safer than here. Since I´ve namely freed myself from my chains back in the kitchen I´m on the run.”
Small sweat beads began to form on Will´s forehead as he feared for what would happen, if Hannibal suddenly showed up. He looked around in slight panic and when his eyes stopped at an innocent looking door, everyone else´s gaze followed his.

Hook didn´t seem to like their possible escape plan.

“Behind this door is a huge balcony with ocean view, but unfortunately it is very close to the cliffs…I hope you know what you´re doing, Will…”, his voice was filled with insecurity.
“I don´t care, Hook. At the moment it is more important to find somewhere to hide from Hannibal, so let´s go.”

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The balcony indeed was huge, no doubt. But it seemed so abandoned with green growth nearly everywhere. The floor was plastered with old looking tiles and could be described as a nostalgic, hemispheric sea of white and green. At the edge of the balcony there was a horizon built by subdued, bellied pillars. Due to the fact that there weren´t any windows either it proved to be the perfect hiding place.
It was cold outside and the cold wind blowing and crashing waves against the cliff didn´t make the temperature any better, but it was fine for them. The escapees wouldn´t have had any better choice anyways but to get out here. None of them -except for Hook maybe- knew the castle´s insides better than Hannibal.

Hook carefully let the old wooden door shut and slide back into its frame, hoping to not have been seen or heard by the magician. If his master should find out what he´s doing here…

“Well then…”

The pirate turned towards Will and Bedilia.
“First of all I want to apologize for everything you´ve been through. Please don´t see me as your enemy, no…quite the opposite.”
He hastily continued.

“Will, I have told you about my past and I hope you understand how much I´ve suffered under Hannibal´s influence for all these years. I´ve always thought of all the victims he had lured into his grasp. I still remember their pleading eyes and prayers as I had to bring them to the kitchen to eventually be cooked by this cannibalistic murderer. All these innocent people…you know, ever since I came here I wanted to get away. But I never had enough courage to actually do something, because I feared my master´s punishment. And then one day I luckily crossed paths with you, Bedilia.”

The fortune teller was taken aback.

“You may had been merely a decoy for my master´s actual target, but as time passed I recognized that you were much more than that. Bedilia, you must know that some people like to gossip about you. Many a person rumoured that you apparently possessed dark magic.”

“Where do you have this information from?”

“During my time as Hannibal´s servant I spent a lot of time in the village. I had to follow his orders and that included keeping my eyes out for potential victims. But what I´m intending to say…Bedilia, I think you are able to rival and defeat Hannibal. I beg you, please, I cannot continue living my life like this! This killing has to stop!”
Hook desperately clung to Bedilia´s shoulders, craving for help. The blond woman gently placed her hands on his arms, leading them off her body.
“I will help you as long as my powers support me.” A short nod followed.

The pirate´s eyes sparkled with tears as he made a low bow in front of the fortune teller.
“Thank you, Bedilia. Dear god, thank you…!”

The door violently swung open and to the three escapees horror they once more met their murderous enemy, Hannibal Lecter, firmly holding the knife he had used in the fight back in the kitchen. His once calm features were no more, the only thing burning in his eyes was rage, rage, rage.

Bedilia, Will and Hook immediately started to back away at the sight of the threat approaching them, but there weren´t many possibilities to outrun him now. Only the door and the end of the cliff.
Eventually, however, they reached the wall of pillars with their backs facing the ocean, separating them from falling down into the roaring waves.

But Hannibal came closer. Dangerously so.

They were cornered now.

Panicked, Will climbed upon the wall, hoping to be safer up there. The more distance the better. Then he took Bedilia´s hand and helped her up as well. If they took one wrong step

backwards, they would have to take a deep dive and hope to hit the water instead of the rocks. Either way it would be better than falling victim to the cannibal.
Hook was not so lucky. Right before he tried to follow the others up the low wall, he was pulled away ruggedly by his former master. Hannibal was fast. The cannibal held his servant tightly with his back towards the magician and the knife close to his throat.

A menace.

“One false move and he´ll die.”

The cannibal merely stood a few feet away from them, close enough for either Will or Bedilia to charge at Hannibal and free the pirate. They bandied hasty looks. Hook silently pleaded for help with his eyes closed, kind of not wanting to believe what just happened. A single tear ran down his cheek.

“What do you want, Hannibal?” Bedilia asked as she carefully slid closer to the edge of the handrail.

She received silence as an answer, while Hook still was held captive. They all knew that the games Hannibal tried to play with them couldn´t go on like this forever. They had to stop him, no matter how. Either Will or the fortune teller would plunge into the ocean or Hook would fall victim to his former master.

And the cold air moved them to come to a decision.

All of a sudden the cannibal faltered backwards and Hook used his moment of weakness to free himself from Hannibal´s grip. Immediately he hurried to his accomplices on the handrail. Everyone looked at Bedilia now. She just stared down at Hannibal´s lifeless body lying there on the floor. A thin smile appeared on her lips.
She had managed to incapacitate him with black magic, the only kind of magic that could be used against someone like him. This spell, however, had a special effect. The person directed this spell at would fall into coma, but coincidence only would decide whether or not the victim would wake up again.

“Bedilia, what…” Hook began, still terrified from what he had just experienced.

“Not now. Thank me later, first we have to get away from here!”

The fortune teller risked a glance down the deadly cliffs. The pirate appeared besides her and finished her thoughts.
“Bedilia…no. We can´t-“

A sharp metal clicking interrupted him as it filled the air. Everyone turned their head to see what caused this noise.
Hannibal Lecter had thrusted his knife into the stone tiles with all his might. This probably wouldn´t have caused more than a deep scratch on the surface, but it was enough for the three escapees to know, that he would soon be on his feet again.

Bedilia climbed down the wall and the others already tried to reason with her, but she merely signalled them to stop by stretching out her right arm laterally.

This would be her battle. Magician against magician.

Meanwhile Hannibal was standing on his own two feet again, wiping a few drops of blood down his mouth with one hand while watching Bedilia sinisterly.
“Hannibal Lecter…”, she started, “from here and now on I will no longer tolerate you inflicting harm on so many innocent people.”

The magician still somewhat fought with his balance but somehow already found enough strength to laugh at her comment.
“Bedilia, my dear, you must know…all these years I´ve had success with what I did. Because people feared me. No one dared to fight me or even come near me, they just always told the tale about the man who made your wishes come true and ate you for dinner afterwards. I used people´s foolishness to my advantage. Still they all searched me out driven by their despair, hoping to end their misery with my help.”

He dedicated his words towards Will.

“Just like your little friend Will Graham.”

The magic in Bedilia´s fingers crackled, ready to attack.
But Hannibal used her wrath to let his knife suddenly float in the air, surrounded by mysterious black fog. Its point sticking out of the mist threateningly.
With a swift arm movement he then gave the order to fire off.

With barely any time to react, Bedilia managed to dodge the weapon and thus turned her body towards her accomplices along with the flying knife, heading right for them. Her heart was almost bursting in her chest from the shock.
The fortune teller didn´t even have enough time to stop the attack with her own magic.

Luckily, however, it missed both Hook and Will. But no one said that they all got away safely. As Will (still standing on the top of the handrail) tried to evade the blade in fear before it stabbed him, he lost his balance and struggled not to fall. But any help was useless.

Before any of them could grab him or even run to him, Hannibal made sure that neither Bedilia nor Hook would move an inch away from where they were by using a petrifying spell on them. So they had to watch him fall backwards into the ocean. That one moment before he vanished, his gaze seemed to tell Bedilia:

“Do I have to die now?”

Eventually Hannibal freed them from his magic and Bedilia immediately sunk to the floor, buried her face in her hands and cried. Normally she was a pretty tough woman, but she just had to witness her only friend´s death and that wouldn´t leave anyone cold.
Hook was even closer to the scenario but was unable to save Will as well. With one arm outstretched towards the other he became petrified by his former master´s dark magic, disabling him in his movements. Simply put, Hook had failed. He had tried to make

everything better that he did wrong for such a long time. He wanted to save somebody´s life for a change instead of taking it.

He could have started his life over. He could have had…friends.

As the spell lost its effect Hook caught himself before falling down the cliff as well. It took a little while for him to excogitate what just happened. He watched Bedilia cower on the floor, crying with her hands covering her face and Hannibal approaching her from behind. He thought of Will, who might have had experienced the last seconds of his life. And he also thought of what he had longed for such a long time. Freedom. A new life.

Now he had to decide.

One last time Hook sternly looked towards Bedilia. Hannibal had already gripped her shoulders, about to violently swing her around.
Then he jumped.

(I´m so terribly sorry, Bedilia.)

The ice-cold wind hit his face like thousands of needles piercing through his skin, while Hook awaited the collision with the water with his eyes firmly narrowed. The cliffs were dangerously close, but luckily the balcony had been built on a ledge.
Seconds later the dive into the water followed where he let out a choked scream. The cold took him all his senses. Eventually he fought his way to the surface and took a deep breath. Panting he kept his eyes open for any sign of life from Will. But he found nothing.

Before either freezing or drowning to death he swam towards the cliff´s mainland where he pulled himself up a low rock, hoping to find a somewhat dry place. Shivering from the cold Hook wrapped his wet coat tightly around himself and took another deep breath. Then he thought of Bedilia and whether she stood a chance against his former master and captive. He himself was adept in all tricks of the trade Hannibal´s power involved and he was well aware that black magic was not to be taken lightly. The pirate hoped for the best.

All of a sudden, as he looked at the grey sky and sea, something in the water caught his eye. It looked human but dived under again and again. Without hesitating, Hook rose from his pitiful position and jumped right back into the freezing cold ocean to save the person who was obviously about to drown.

No doubt it must have been Will Graham.

Chapter End Notes

Aye, finally a new chapter! :)

Aaah the suspense, will Bedilia make it out alive? What´s with Will?

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